

## FORM B – BUILDING

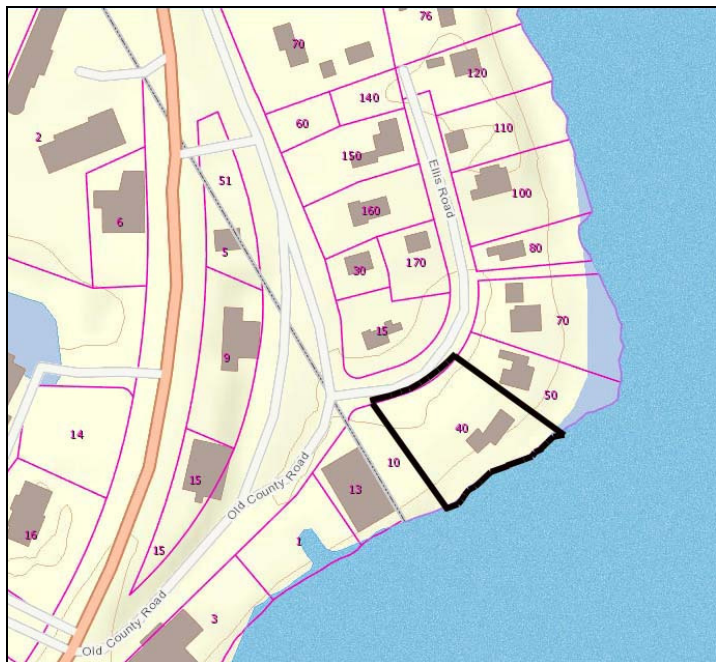
MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD  
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

### Photograph



View from southwest.

### Locus Map



**Recorded by:** Larson Fisher Associates with Kathryn Grover

**Organization:** Eastham Historical Commission

**Date:** April 2013

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

22-017

ORLEANS

EAS.590

**Town/City:** Eastham

**Place:** South Eastham

**Address:** 40 Ellis Road

**Historic Name:** John B. and Emelie Meunier Fish House

**Uses:** Present: single-family residence

Original: fish processing plant

**Date of Construction:** ca. 1938

**Source:** tax records, deeds

**Style/Form:** undetermined

**Architect/Builder:** unknown

#### Exterior Material:

Foundation: concrete block

Wall/Trim: vertical wood

Roof: asphalt shingles

**Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:** none

**Major Alterations** (*with dates*): conversion to single family residence (1966); hyphen addition between main building and detached garage probably occurred about that time.

**Condition:** good

**Moved:** no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

**Acreage:** .38 acres

**Setting:** The property is located on the south side of Ellis Road with water frontage on Town Cove, an inlet from the Atlantic Ocean. The building is set far back on the lot which has a number of mature trees. It is the southernmost lot within a single family subdivision, and commercial uses are located to its west.

# INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

EASTHAM

40 ELLIS ROAD

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☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

### ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

This building was adapted from commercial to residential use about 1966. It is one-and-one-half stories in height with a gable roof and a symmetrically organized three-bay front facade. A central entrance, flanked by eight-over-eight windows with decorative blinds, is located below front gabled wall dormer that once contained a loading door and now has a single six-over-six double hung window. The first story portion of the building is constructed of concrete block, while the upper section is wood frame. The rear wall chimney may or may not have been added. The entire building has been resided with vertical wood siding, as was the detached two-stall garage to its right (west) perhaps at the point a gable-roofed one-story, three-bay hyphen with secondary entrance was constructed to connect the buildings (date unknown).<sup>1</sup> In 1992 a wood deck off the rear of the dwelling was constructed.<sup>2</sup> A covenant was placed on the property, which limits the number of bedrooms to three, when a variance for a new septic system was allowed.<sup>3</sup> A wood rail fence borders the front property line.

### HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

What is now a single-family dwelling at 40 Ellis Road was originally the fish processing plant started by John B. Meunier, perhaps with his brother Edward, probably about 1938. In December 1937 the Meunier brothers acquired four lots in a twenty-seven-lot subdivision platted by Gilbert E. Ellis of Brewster in April 1925. Ellis was a farmer, realtor, and owner of a shore net and pound fishery and was born in Brewster in 1867; his father, Thaddeus, was a fisherman, and his mother, Caroline J. Norway, was born in Spain. Ellis began his career as a store clerk when he was fourteen, if not younger. At the time of his marriage in 1887 he worked as a salesman. The 1900 census shows Ellis as a fisherman; the 1910 census shows him more specifically as a weir fisherman. He was among a declining number of Cape fishermen in what was termed the "shore net and pound fishery," which used large nets attached to a wood framework extending from the shore outward to catch such inshore schooling fish as herring and menhaden; these were sold as bait to the offshore fishing industry, and other species caught in the nets were sold to urban fresh-fish markets after rail lines reached the Cape in the 1870s. In 1914 the town of Brewster granted Ellis a permit to build six fish pounds in its coastal waters, and by 1920 Ellis was one of three Brewster men who ran a pound fishery; he employed seven men, among the most of any of the 43 pound fisheries in the state, and caught \$3100 of fish.<sup>4</sup>

Once a prosperous industry on Cape Cod, the pound fishery began to decline after World War I, and by 1920 Ellis was probably preparing to leave the industry. The 1920 census shows him as a farmer, and by 1929 he is listed as a realtor. In September 1924 he bought four acres in South Eastham bordered mostly by the state highway, Town Cove, and what was, for a brief time, a canal that connected Town Cove to the river at Boat Meadow on Cape Cod Bay, a distance of less than a mile.<sup>5</sup> Ellis acquired the tract from New York City insurance broker Frederick Dorflinger Suydam, whose father, William Farrington Suydam, was an affluent Pennsylvania silk manufacturer and a summer resident of Orleans. The tract was part of the far larger holdings of Captain Heman Smith and his wife Louisiana Crosby Smith, who lived at 70 Old State Highway (EAS.43). In 1881, five years after the Smiths were lost at sea in the wreck of the bark *Burnside*, their children sold the property to their sibling Francis M. Smith (1852-1922), who in 1898 sold it to Somerville carpenter George S. Newcomb, an Orleans native. In 1913 Newcomb's son, George E. Newcomb, sold the four-acre tract to Albert F. Sherman, superintendent of the quarantine station on Gallup's Island in Boston Harbor, and in 1916 Sherman and his wife sold it to Frederick Suydam's mother, Mary Elizabeth Dorflinger Suydam.<sup>6</sup>

By January 1926 Ellis had built a house—what is now 76 Old State Highway—on the northernmost 1.5 acres of the tract, and in early December 1937 he sold lot 9, which already had a cottage on it, and lots 10, 11, and 12 and a half-acre of "flats" between an extension of the boundaries of lots 8 and 9 to the Meuniers.<sup>7</sup> John B. and Edward Meunier were the sons of Theodore and Exilda Milliard Meunier, who had emigrated to the United States from French-speaking Canada in 1899 with their children Theodore Jr., Joseph, and Edward, born in 1897; John B. Meunier was born in Warwick, Rhode Island, probably in 1900. By 1930 the brothers had both married French Canadian immigrant women and had moved out of their parents' household. John B.

<sup>1</sup> No building permits for the construction of the hyphen or residing were located.

<sup>2</sup> Town of Eastham building permit records; addition dated Oct. 15, 1992.

<sup>3</sup> Town of Eastham building permit records dated May 21, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> On the pound fishery, see Matthew McKenzie, *Clearing the Coastline: The Nineteenth-Century Ecological & Cultural Transformation of Cape Cod* (Hanover, NH, and London: University Press of New England, 2010), especially 11-12, 33, 91, 96, 138-39, 164, 172; *Thirty-Sixth Annual Report of the Board of Harbor and Land Commissioners For the Year 1914* (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1915), 100; and "Returns from the Shore Net and Pound Fisheries for the Year 1920," *Annual Report of the Division of Fisheries and Game for the Year Ending November 30, 1920* (Boston: Wright & Potter Printing Co., 1921), 151-58.

<sup>5</sup> Alice A. Lowe, comp., *Nauset on Cape Cod: A History of Eastham*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Eastham, MA: Eastham Historical Society, 1968), 35-36, states that the canal was dug in 1804 through "land following very nearly the boundary line between the towns of Eastham and Orleans" and became known as "Jeremiah's Gutter" where it crossed the property of Jeremiah Smith. A shallow channel, the canal filled quickly, and in 1817 the Eastham and Orleans Canal Proprietors built a wider one, but it was abandoned at some unstated later date.

<sup>6</sup> William H. Smith, Boston; Mary M. Smith and Nellie J. Smith, all formerly of Eastham, to Francis M. Smith, 1 November 1881, Barnstable County Registry of Deeds (BCD) 148:366; Francis M. Smith, Somerville, to George S. Newcomb, 5 November 1898, BCD 296:12; George S. Newcomb to George E. Newcomb, 28 May 1909, BCD 296:105; George E. Newcomb to Albert F. Sherman, Boston, 6 January 1913, BCD 321:21; Albert F. and Emma L. Sherman to Mary E. Suydam, Montclair NJ, 15 August 1916, BCD 345:440; Frederick D. Suydam, NYC, to Gilbert E. Ellis, East Brewster, 4 September 1924, BCD 409:454.

<sup>7</sup> Gilbert E. Ellis, Brewster, to John B. Meunier, Orleans, and Edward Meunier, Apponaug RI, 4 December 1937, BCD 534:240.

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Meunier was living in Warren, Rhode Island, and working as a dredger for an oyster company, and by then Edward was working as a loom fixer in Willimantic, Connecticut.

By 1940 the family of John Meunier had moved into the existing house at 50 Ellis Road (on lot 9) and may have built the fish processing plant at 40 Ellis Road at that time; a concrete stoop, formerly a loading dock, extending along the front facade of the 40 Ellis Road house indicates its former function.<sup>8</sup> The 1940 census shows John B. Meunier and his family as one of two households on Ellis Road. He was then working as a wholesale shellfish buyer, and the census indicates that he had lived elsewhere in Barnstable County in 1935. His household included his wife Emelia, sixteen-year-old daughter Alice, and twelve-year-old daughter Loretta. The census enumerator in 1940 noted in the margin that ownership of the property was "shared with brother." A 1942 draft registration card for Edward Meunier, then living in Apponaug, Rhode Island, notes that he was a wholesale shellfish dealer and gave his brother John as a contact. Tax records for 1947 document that John B. Meunier owned lots 9-12 in the Ellis subdivision as well as a cottage valued at \$2200, a garage at \$150, and a "fish house" at \$1000.

In 1955 Edward Meunier and his wife Alphonsine sold their interest in 40 and 50 Ellis Road to John B. and Emelie Meunier, and by 1965 the latter couple had transferred their interest to their daughters Alice A. Bernard, wife of Albert Joseph Bernard, and Loretta Rayhill, wife of Robert J. Rayhill. In 1965 Alice and her husband ceded their interest in the Ellis Road properties to her sister Loretta. In 1966 Loretta Rayhill sold the properties to Elizabeth P. Daiute of Braintree who undertook the renovation of the fish plant into a residence. In 1968 she and her husband Michael George Daiute sold 50 Ellis Rd. on lot 9. Elizabeth G. Daiute now lives at 40 Ellis Road, which she placed in the Daiute Family Nominee Trust in 2003.<sup>9</sup>

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## MAPS

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## SUPPLEMENTARY IMAGES

<sup>8</sup> Herb Skelly, former chair Eastham Historical Commission, e-mail to Elisabeth K. Sandler, 30 December 2012, states that the property was a fish plant and calls its later renovation into a dwelling "a classic story of re-use."

<sup>9</sup> Edward and Alphonsine Meunier, Warwick RI, to John B. and Emelie Meunier, Eastham, 11 April 1955, BCD 905:208; Albert J. and Alice A. Bernard, Warwick RI, to Loretta E. Rayhill, Warwick RI, 15 December 1965, SED 1321:718; Loretta E. Rayhill, Warwick RI, to Michael G. and Elizabeth P. Daiute, Braintree, 14 June 1966, BCD 1338:527; Elizabeth P. Daiute, 40 Ellis Road, to Elizabeth P. Daiute, trustee Daiute Family Nominee Trust, 20 February 2003, BCD 16430:69.

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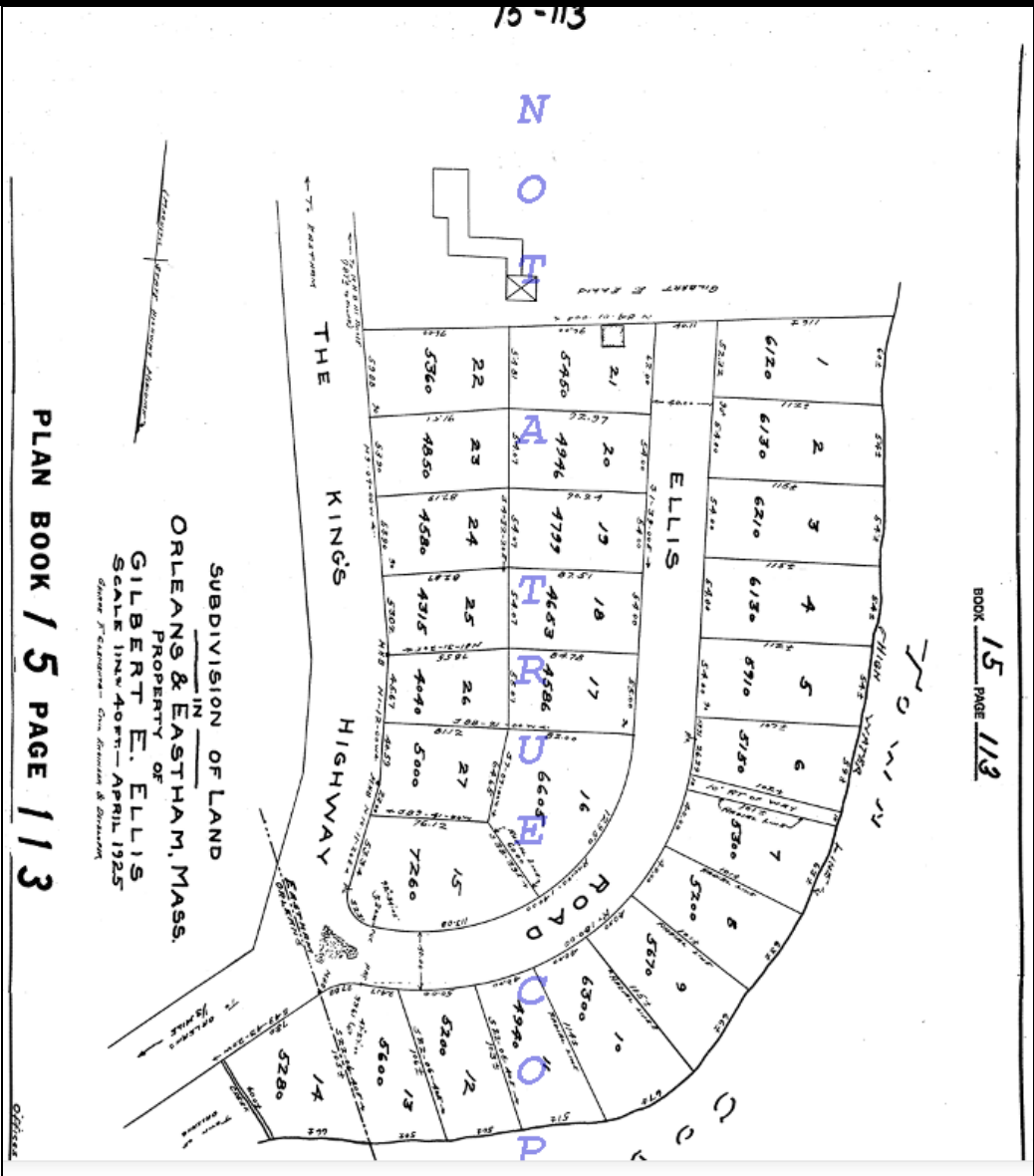
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Ellis subdivision plan of 1925 (BCP 15:113): 40 Ellis Road occupies lots 10-12.

PHOTOGRAPHS

(credit Larson Fisher Associates, 2012-2013 unless otherwise noted)



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Front & rear views of 40 Ellis Rd.; Left, before its conversion to a dwelling; Right after its conversion. (Photographs courtesy Herb Skelly and Eastham Historical Commission.)



Aerial view from east (courtesy Bing Maps).



View from north (courtesy Town of Eastham Assessor.)